JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE

3
AUG 93

JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

THE FINAL SOLUTION!

BY MICHELINIE, VELLUTO & ALBRECHT

Sal Velluto '93

TWISTED GLASS!

SANOBEL ISLAND; THE CARIBBEAN SANCTUARY OF DRUG LORD MIGUEL PIRO--

--WHERE AQUAMAN AND NIGHTWING BATTLE TO KEEP ARMED GUARDS AND POLITICAL GUERRILLAS FROM THEIR FALLEN LEADER, J'ONN J'ONZZ!

DAVID MICHELINIE - WRITER
SAL VELLUTO - PENCILLER
JEFF ALBRECHT - INKER
BOB PINAHA - LETTERER
GLENN WHITMORE - COLORIST
RUBEN DIAZ - ASS'T EDITOR
BRIAN AUGUSTYN - EDITOR

THE FIRST MISSION OF THE NEWLY-FORMED JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE--

--IS NOT GOING WELL!

JOHN GOT TOO CLOSE TO THAT *DEATH PROJECTOR!*

IT'S ENERGY FIELD KNOCKED HIM COLD!

MANHUNTER'S OUR STRONGEST MEMBER! IF *HE* COULDN'T GET THROUGH TO SHUT THE THING OFF, *WE* DON'T STAND A CHANCE!

BUT IT'S FOCUSED ON THE GOVERNMENT PALACE IN THE CAPITAL! *HUNDREDS* COULD DIE!

AND THAT INCLUDES *FLASH* AND *GYPSY!*

WE'VE GOT TO *DO* SOMETHING!

COUNT GLASS! *D-D-DO* SOMETHING!

DON'T WORRY, PIRO, OL' BOY--

--THAT BROADCASTER CAN'T BE SHUT OFF 'TIL IT'S SPENT! RAFE SIERRA'S PLAN TA KILL *PRESIDENT RAMOS* IS AS GOOD AS DONE!

I DON'T *CARE* ABOUT THAT! LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY BEAUTIFUL *VILLA!*

I'LL COVER THE TAB, MATE! JUST RELAX AN' ENJOY THE SPECTACLE!

"ENJOY"?

YOUR DEATH CANNON WORKS AS PROMISED--BUT NO ONE KNEW *PABLO* WOULD BE IN THE CAPITAL! BY ACTIVATING THE MACHINE--

--I'M KILLING MY OWN *BROTHER!*

GEE, MISTER SIERRA, THAT'S ROUGH. I--

GET OFF, JOHANN! 'E DON'T NEED COMFORT FROM THE LIKES O' *YOU!*

WHERE'S YER *ARMOR,* ANYWAY? YER PAID TA *PROTECT* US!

--B-BUT, COUNT, THEY TOOK US BY *SURPRISE--!*

JUST GET YER GEAR AN DO YER BLOODY *JOB!*

Y-YES, SIR! I... I'M SORRY!

GOOD. A BLOKE NEEDS TA KNOW 'IS PLACE...!

CAPITAL CITY.

M-MY INSIDES... FEEL LIKE THEY'RE *MELTING!*

SOMEONE MUST'VE TRIGGERED THE *DEATH CANNON!*

GOTTA MOVE!

SENTIMENTS SHARED NEARBY, BY PABLO SIERRA!

BRAIN ON FIRE! BUT THE *GUARDS* FEEL IT, TOO!

M-MAYBE I CAN *ESCAPE!*

NO! I-I CAN HARDLY WORK... MY LEGS! C-CAN'T RUN!

I...I'LL NEVER MAKE IT!

HOWEVER...

LISTEN TO ME! GET OUT OF THE PALACE--*NOW!*

ANYONE WHO STAYS INSIDE WILL *DIE!*

THERE'S THE CAPTURED REBEL *GYP* POINTED OUT! BUT WHAT ABOUT *EVERYONE ELSE?*

I CAN'T SAVE THEM *ALL!*

THAT'S THE BEST I CAN DO! I JUST HOPE THEY TAKE *ME SERIOUSLY!*

ONE WISE OFFICIAL OBVIOUSLY DOES...!

GET ME OUT OF HERE!

BUT PRESIDENT RAMOS, YOUR STAFF--!

GO!

SEÑOR PRESIDENT! PLEASE--!

W-WAIT FOR US!

STOP--!

VVVVVVOOOOOOSSSSSSSHHHHHHH

THE END COMES SWIFTLY.

AND MOMENTS LATER, AS STUNNED HEROES EXAMINE THE GRISLY AFTER-MATH...

THIS...IS ALL THAT'S LEFT OF *HUMAN BEINGS*?!

WHAT KIND OF MAN COULD *DO* A THING LIKE THAT?

A MAN, SEÑORITA... WHO LOVES HIS COUNTRY.

ELSEWHERE...

AAIIIIEEE!

M-MY EYES--!

FLARE PELLETS TOOK CARE OF THOSE TWO!

BUT THAT STILL LEAVES-- HUH?

TRUCK ENGINE!

THEY'RE HAULING THE CANNON AWAY!

U.S. ARMY

IT MUST'VE RELEASED ITS CHARGE-- SAFE TO MOVE NOW!

WE HAVE TO *STOP* IT!

BLITZ REPORTING, SIR! WHAT SHOULD I DO?

HOW ABOUT ZAPPIN' THE ONE WHAT'S ALREADY *DOWN*--EVEN *YOU* SHOULD BE ABLE TA HANDLE *THAT*!

BESIDES, IT'LL TAKE THOSE *OTHER* BOYS' MINDS OFFA *PURSUIT*, EH?

HMMM...

NIGHTWING! SOMETHING *NEW'S* BEEN ADDED!

AND IT'S HEADED STRAIGHT FOR J'ONN!

THE COUNT'S GONNA BE *PROUD O'* ME WHEN I TAKE YOU OUT, MISTER! AFTER MY *WIND GUN* SETS YOU UP--

VOOOSH

--MY *BOLT GENERATOR'LL* FRY YOU LIKE A CRISPY GREEN FRITTER!

BZZZZ

WHA--?!

LEAVE 'IM ALONE!

OKAY, THEN: ONE *GREEN* FRITTER--

SNAP

SNAP

--AN' A COUPLE O' PASTY *WHITE* ONES!

SKA-

RAK

GEEZ, BIG GUY--

BZZZZ

--DON'T YOU KNOW--

VROOOOOM

?!

--THAT FRIED FOODS AREN'T GOOD FOR YOU?

TLIC TLIC

TLIC TLIC

MORE OF 'EM! GOTTA GET TO THE COUNT! MAKE SURE HE GETS AWAY SAFELY!

FORGET THE CANNON! GETTING J'ONN OUT'S OUR TOP PRIORITY!

C'MON!

YOU'RE WELCOME!

VROOOOO

SCREEE

THIS IS AN OUTRAGE! I'M AN HONEST BUSINESSMAN!

THE MEDIA WILL HEAR OF THIS!

JUST MAKE SURE YOU GET MY NAME RIGHT, PAL! THAT'S "NIGHTWING"--

--WITHOUT A "K"!

VROOOOM

SOON, IN THE SURROUNDING JUNGLE...

WE'RE GLAD YOU AND GYPSY GOT OUT OF THE CAPITAL, FLASH--

--BUT WHO'S THE *PRISONER* YOU SAY YOU BROUGHT BACK?

PABLO SIERRA-- THE REBEL LEADER'S *BROTHER.*

HE SAYS *RAFAEL* SIERRA IS A DEDICATED MAN, JUST TRYING TO DO WHAT'S BEST FOR HIS PEOPLE.

BUT HE'S BEING MANIPULATED BY SOME EUROTRASH NAMED *COUNT GLASS!* GLASS IS THE ONE WHO PROVIDED THE DEATH CANNON--

--BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE HIS *OWN* AGENDA!

ALMOST LIKE HE LOVES TEARING RAFAEL *DOWN,* STRIPPING HIM OF HIS NOBILITY!

HMM. SOUNDS LIKE THIS "GLASS" JERK COULD BE THE *REAL* ENEMY!

OH, WOW! YOU'RE ALL OKAY! THAT'S *GREAT!*

HANNIBAL MARTIN'S ON THE HORN, J'ONN! HE WANTS A REPORT!

MAYBE *YOU* SHOULD TALK TO HIM, AQUAMAN. I WAS *OUT* OF IT FOR A WHILE.

AND IN NEW YORK, AFTER THE SITUATION HAS BEEN EXPLAINED...

WHAT?! NIGHTWING GAVE THE ORDER TO LET THE DEATH PROJECTOR GO?

WHO DIED AND MADE HIM POPE?

WAIT A MINUTE! GIMME THAT!

LOOK, MARTIN, THE UNITED NATIONS PEGGED YOU TO RUN THIS TASK FORCE AND I ACCEPT THAT!

BUT THERE'S ONE THING I'LL NEVER ACCEPT!

THAT'S LETTING SOMEONE--ANYONE-- DIE!

NOT MOTHER TERESA, NOT CHARLES MANSON!

WE KEPT J'ONN J'ONZZ ALIVE, AND THAT'S WHAT MATTERS!

YOU WERE ON A BATTLEFIELD! SACRIFICES HAVE TO BE MADE--!

BULL! IF YOU WANT SOMEONE WHO'LL PUT HARDWARE OVER HUMAN LIVES, BUDDY--

--YOU PICKED THE WRONG HERO!

THIS IS NIGHTWING-- OVER AND OUT!

=TSK= SO MUCH FOR THE FRENCH AMBASSADORSHIP YOU THOUGHT THIS ASSIGNMENT WOULD EARN YOU...!

NONSENSE, MARIETTA! THE BOY BEHAVED EXACTLY AS I EXPECTED!

WHICH IS WHY I ALLOWED HIM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FIRST PLACE!

?

WHILE ON SANOBEL...

OKAY, COUNT, I MADE SURE THE COAST IS CLEAR!

LIKE YA MADE SURE THOSE RUFFIANS WOULDN'T DRIVE US FROM PIRO'S?

B-BUT--!

STOW IT!

IF NOT FER YOU, WE'D BE DONE BY NOW!

SORRY YER SPIES FOUND OUT RAMOS WAS STILL ALIVE, RAFE!

BUT SNEAKIN' IN AS AN AMERICAN ARMS SHIPMENT IS A DANDY PLAN!

THE UTILITY PLANT NEXT TO THE GOVERNMENT PALACE IS THE ONLY SOURCE LEFT WITH ENOUGH POWER FOR THE CANNON.

US ARMY

GONNA BE TOUGH ON YA, GOIN' IN THERE-- SINCE THAT'S WHERE YA HAD YER OWN BROTHER KILT!

HE WON'T HAVE DIED IN VAIN!

I'LL OPERATE THE MACHINE MYSELF! RAMOS WILL BE CAUGHT IN ITS DEATH FIELD THIS TIME--NO MATTER HOW MANY OTHERS MUST DIE AS WELL!

BLIMEY!

YER STARTIN' TA SOUND ALMOST AS BLOODTHIRSTY AS THE DESPOT YA WANTA GET RID OF!

VROOOM

WOT A PITY...!

NIGHT COMES TO THE JUNGLE...

I'VE ANALYZED THE DATA FROM YOUR MISSION SO FAR, J'ONN--

--AND HAVE DETERMINED THAT YOU SHOULD HIT THE CAPITAL AT DAYBREAK!

SLIM QUICK

THE POWER PLANT THERE IS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE THE REBELS CAN CHARGE THEIR WEAPON, AND SIERRA'S GRIEF AT HIS BROTHER'S "DEATH" MAY WELL DRIVE HIM TO SUCH A SUICIDAL PLOY!

DIRECT THE STRIKE AS YOU SEE FIT. MY ONLY PROVISO IS THAT IF RAMOS SHOULD TRY TO GET TO THE WAVE PROJECTOR--

--NIGHTWING ALONE WILL BE ASSIGNED TO STOP HIM!

WHAT?!

BUT, SIR! NIGHTWING IS A LOOSE CANNON!

HE'S BEEN GRANDSTANDING ALL ALONG! HOW CAN WE TRUST HIM TO DO WHAT HE'S TOLD?

JUST SHOW ME THAT YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU'RE TOLD!

END OF TRANSMISSION!

KLIK

MORNING, IN SANOBEL'S SLEEPY CAPITAL...

I'M SORRY, SEÑOR, BUT THIS PASS IS *OUTDATED*. I'LL HAVE TO CHECK WITH--

STOP

I DON'T HAVE *TIME* FOR THIS!

QUE--?!

KRANCH

VRATATATT

CHAKA-CHAK

QUICKLY! TO THE POWER SUBSTATION!

BDRRRRAP

U.S. ARM

CONNECT THE *MACHINE* TO THE *GENERATORS*!

THEN LEAVE-- *ALL* OF YOU!

I'M GOING TO DIRECT THE KILLING ENERGY AT THE PALACE ITSELF! IF ANY OF YOU REMAIN--

--YOU'LL DIE!

ON A PARAPET ABOVE...
CUT THEM DOWN! WE'RE OUT OF THEIR RANGE!
BUT WHAT ABOUT ME?
EH?
SORRY, SEÑORITA, WE ARE ON DUTY NOW.
PERHAPS AFTER THE BATTLE...
AFTER THE BATTLE, CAP'N MACHO, YOU'LL BE BUSY RECUPERATING!
CHOK
CARAMBA!
THEY KNOW--
--WE'RE HERE!
WE CAN FORGET--
--SUBTLETY!
GOOD! A QUICK SHOWER WILL GIVE ME ALL THE STRENGTH I NEED!
FWOOOSH
GRAB AS MANY GUNS AS YOU CAN, FLASH! WE WANT TO KEEP BLOOD-SHED TO A MINIMUM!
NIGHTWING! STICK WITH ME!
SORRY, J'ONN, BUT I GUESS YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG!
I'M NOT MUCH OF A FOLLOWER!
TAKE NO PRISONERS! LEAVE NO WOUNDED!
SI, MI PRESIDENTE!
RAMOS!
14
ENGAGED
DANGER
FIRST THINGS FIRST!
TK
NOW, ANIMAL, TO MAKE CERTAIN--
--YOU DON'T ESCAPE THIS TIME!
THAT'S THE REBEL LEADER! BUT--
--WHY'S HE RUNNING *INTO* THE PALACE?!
15

RAMOS! WHERE ARE YOU, YOU MURDERING PIG?!

TENK

HERE!

WHA--?!

PABLO--? Y-YOU'RE ALIVE?!

BETTER GET DOWN, BROTHER--OR YOU WON'T BE!

CHBOOM

RAMOS IS GETTING AWAY! YOU CAN CATCH HIM--!

ONLY BY LEAVING YOU BEHIND, PABLO! I LOST YOU ONCE--

--I WON'T CHANCE IT AGAIN! COME, LET US BOTH FIND SAFETY!

EASIER SAID THAN DONE! FOR OUTSIDE--

--THE EFFECTS OF THE DEATH PROJECTOR ARE BUILDING, STARTING TO BE FELT EVEN BY--

--THE HEROES SENT TO STOP IT!

OH, MAN! FEELS LIKE SOMEONE FILLED MY SKULL WITH "POP SECRET" AND TURNED THE MICROWAVE ON HIGH! GOT TO--

--HUH? THAT'S THE DICTATOR, HEADING FOR THE DEATH CANNON! HE COULD TURN IT ON US-- OR EVEN THE WHOLE TOWN!

TOO FAR AWAY FOR A BATARANG OR A GRAPPLE! BUT IF I SHOOT *AROUND* HIM, MAYBE I CAN TURN HIM AWAY!

KRAK KRAK KRA

NO GOOD! ONLY *ONE* WAY TO STOP HIM!

C'MON! PULL THE TRIGGER! *THOUSANDS* OF LIVES ARE AT STAKE!

IT'S THE ONLY WAY! THE... *ON...LY...*

...DAMN! I...CAN'T...!

LET'S GO, NIGHTWING. WE'VE GOT TO GET CLEAR.

DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF. THINGS HAVE A WAY OF WORKING OUT.

I...I COULD'VE... STOPPED HIM.

THEY DO INDEED.

FOR EXAMPLE:

YOU WON'T KILL *ME*, YOU BLOODY MACHINE!

BDAM BDAM BDAM

I'LL KILL YOU!

TTTT TTTT

WHILE BEING A TYRANT MAY TAKE CUNNING, RUTHLESSNESS AND GREED, IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY REQUIRE--

--BRAINS!

THE NEXT DAY, IN A MUCH LESS REPRESSED CAPITAL CITY...

WE DID IT, RAFE! SANOBEL IS YOURS TO LEAD!

EL PUEBLO UNIDO JAMAS SERA VENCIDO!

LIBERTAD

NO, PABLO. I CANNOT ASK THE PEOPLE TO FOLLOW A MAN WHO WAS READY TO KILL THEM IN ORDER TO SAVE THEM!

YOU WILL BE PRESIDENTE!

WHAT---?

HEAR ME, LITTLE BROTHER: YOU MUST SEEK ALLIANCE WITH THE UNITED STATES!

THEY BACKED RAMOS, SI, BUT THEIR STRENGTH WILL HELP US THROUGH THIS TURBULENT TIME!

AND WHILE COMPROMISE IS A SOUR WINE, PABLO, ALL TRUE LEADERS KEEP IT AT HAND.

WE WERE SENT TO PRESERVE THE TREATY BETWEEN SANOBEL AND THE U.S., AND THAT'S BEEN DONE. PLUS, A DICTATOR WAS REMOVED AND A NIGHTMARE WEAPON DESTROYED!

I'D SAY OUR MISSION WAS ACCOMPLISHED!

BUT HOW MUCH ELSE WAS DESTROYED ALONG THE WAY? SOMEHOW...

...I DON'T FEEL MUCH LIKE CELEBRATING.

HOWEVER, TWO DAYS LATER IN NEW YORK, SOMEONE DOES...!

THE DEBRIEFINGS ARE DONE, AND AS SOON AS THIS MOTLEY CREW IS OFFICIALLY DISBANDED--

--I CAN GET ON WITH MY CAREER!

BEFORE WE GO, MR. MARTIN, I THINK I OWE YOU AN APOLOGY.

YOU COUNTED ON ME TO STOP RAMOS. I FAILED.

AND I'M SORRY.

I'M A GREAT BELIEVER IN ODDS, AND COULDN'T TAKE THE CHANCE THAT IN THE ZEAL OF THE MOMENT, SOMEONE MIGHT KILL RAMOS BEFORE THAT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED!

EXCELLENT, MARIETTA! TELL THE GENERAL WE'LL BE RIGHT OVER!

NONSENSE, MY BOY. CHARACTER AND SITUATIONAL ANALYSES INDICATED--

--THAT RAMOS WOULD ATTEMPT TO STOP THE DEATH MACHINE *PERSONALLY*, AND THAT THERE WAS A 97% PROBABILITY THAT HE'D *DESTROY* THE MECHANISM IN THE PROCESS!

SO I ASSIGNED YOU, THE ONE MEMBER WHO WOULD *NEVER* KILL, TO KEEP RAMOS "FROM" THE MACHINE. YOU FAILED...

...BECAUSE I *INTENDED* YOU TO FAIL!

YOU... YOU SONOVA--

NIGHTWING--!

HEY, MARTIN! WHAT HE WAS GONNA SAY?

THAT GOES DOUBLE FOR ME!

I KNOW MR. MARTIN'S METHODS WERE QUESTIONABLE, BUT WE DID MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

AND THAT COUNTS FOR SOMETHING.

I'VE ARRANGED FOR YOU TO STAY HERE UNTIL YOU FIND A WAY TO SUPPORT YOURSELF, GYPSY.

THANKS, J'ONN.

I'D BETTER PICK UP A CAN OF "RAID" BEFORE I SETTLE IN, THOUGH.

THAT'S IT! I'M OUTTA HERE!

I THINK I SMELL A ROACH!

--AND IN A RELATED STORY, COUNT JEREMY GLASS AND HIS AIDE, JOHANN STERN, WERE DEPORTED FROM STRIFE-TORN SANOBEL ISLAND TODAY--

NCC

IT DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT. GLASS WAS THE CATALYST IN THIS WHOLE AFFAIR. PEOPLE DIED, PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY.

BUT HE GETS OFF WITH A SLAP ON THE WRIST.

LET IT GO, J'ONN.

YOUR SOUL WILL EAT YOU ALIVE IF YOU LET IT.

ACCEPT THAT IT'S NOT A PERFECT WORLD.

YOU'LL LIVE LONGER!

WHILE IN THE FIRST CLASS COMPARTMENT OF AN EAST-BOUND AIRLINER...

HERE YA GO, COUNT. A NICE, FLUFFY--

I DON'T WANT *NOTHIN'* FROM YOU, DIMWIT!

IF YA'D DONE YER *JOB*, WE WOULDN'T BE *HUMILIATED* LIKE THIS!

ACTUALLY, I'M FAIRLY PLEASED! I KNOCKED THAT HOLIER'N THOU *SIERRA* DOWN A FEW PEGS, I DID!

BUT THOSE COSTUMED *BUTTINSKIES* WERE A ROYAL PAIN!

I JUST MAY HAFTA *PUNISH* 'EM SOME DAY...!

AND, THAT AFTER-NOON AT THE PENTAGON...

COME IN, MR. MARTIN, MS. BOWES.

I BELIEVE CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER!

I KNEW IT! THAT FRENCH AMBASSADORSHIP IS *MINE!* =HEH.=

IN FACT, THE SANOBEL MISSION WAS SUCH A *COMPLETE* SUCCESS THAT WE'VE DECIDED TO MAKE THE TASK FORCE AN *ONGOING* OPERATION!

OH?

THAT'S RIGHT. SHOULD SIMILAR CRISES EMERGE IN THE FUTURE, WE'LL BE *READY* FOR THEM!

AND AS A *REWARD* FOR YOUR EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP IN THE TASK FORCE'S FIRST ASSIGNMENT--

--YOU'VE BEEN CHOSEN TO REMAIN AS *PERMANENT* HEAD OF OPERATIONS!

=GHK...
=G-GHK...
=EEP=

SEE, GENERAL? I *TOLD* YOU HE'D BE SPEECHLESS!

HANNIBAL--!

I'M *TRAPPED*, MARI! IF I SUCCEED, I'LL KEEP THIS HELL JOB FOR-EVER!

BUT IF I *FAIL*, I CAN KISS DREAMS OF THAT AMBASSADOR-SHIP GOODBYE!

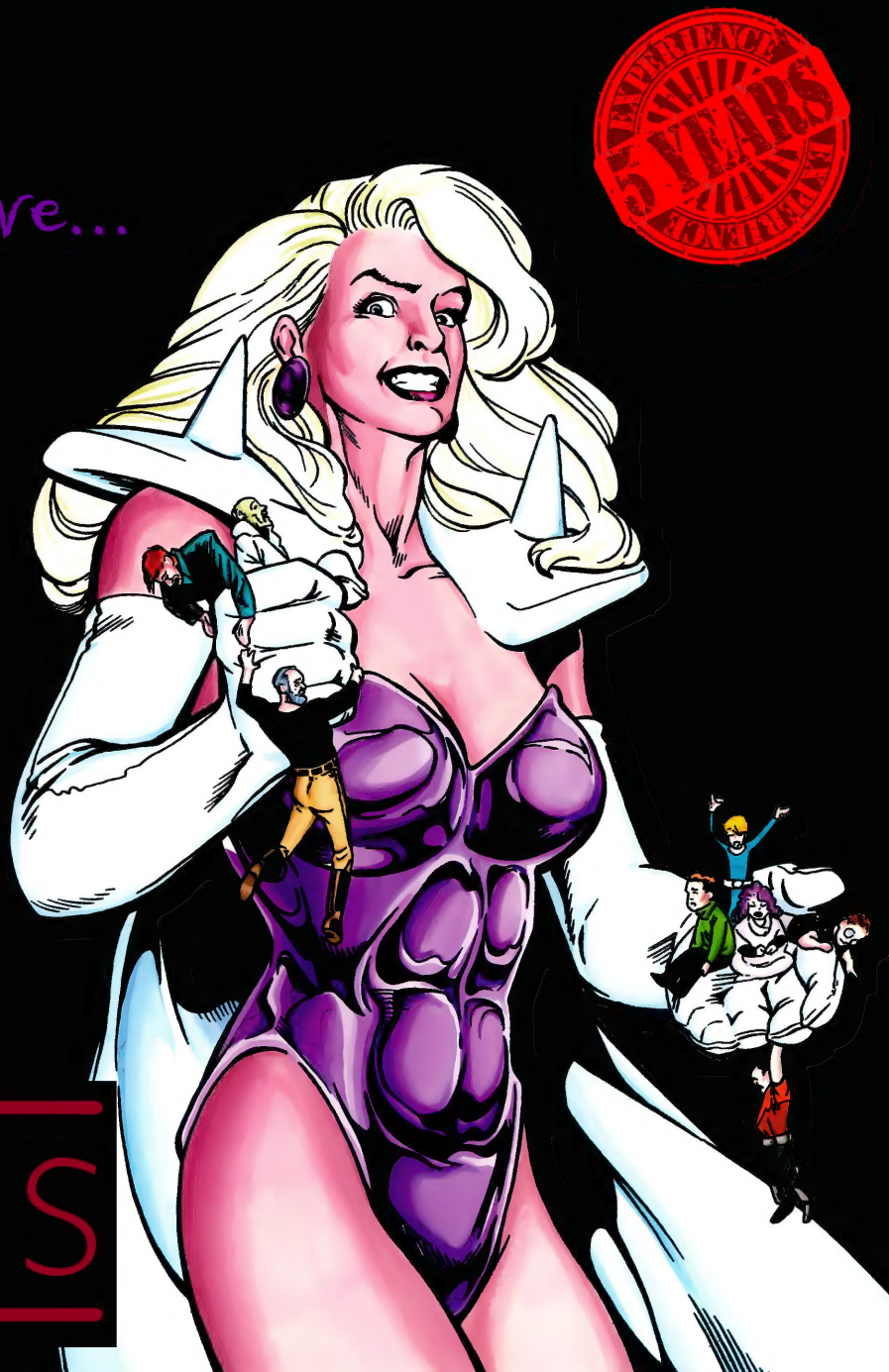
MY ONLY CONSOLATION IS THAT *MISERY* LOVES *COMPANY!* AND IN THIS INSTANCE, THAT MISERY WILL BE SHARED BY THE *JUSTICE LEAGUE!*

HMMM.

I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL A BIT *BETTER* ALREADY!

NEXT: ***KNIGHTFALL!***

From Baaldur, with love...



GLORITH

novus